

Panorama

Helping Rural Canada

Sociology professor Bill Reimer Heads
Up Massive NRE Research Project



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A word from the Dean



Building on momentum

It was not without some trepidation that I agreed to serve as interim Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science after my predecessor, Dr. Martin Singer was appointed Provost of Concordia University this past June. Martin's many accomplishments as Dean over the past seven years have been truly impressive. Under his leadership, almost 200 new tenure-track professors have been hired; award-winning facilities have been constructed that have transformed our campus; and enrollment has increased by 25%. The Faculty has rarely been in better health. It is, simply put, a hard act to follow.

That being said, follow it we must. Although our Faculty has made great strides in recent years, we cannot afford to lose any momentum. With that in mind, hiring of new faculty is continuing at a steady pace: we expect to hire at least 25 new professors this year. Construction of the new Drummond building to house our Communication Studies and Journalism departments is well under way, following the same energy-efficient model that recently won the Richard J. Renaud Science Complex two prestigious awards. Enrollment continues to rise, and research funding was up another 28% in the past two years.

The issues now facing the Faculty are ones borne out of the fruits of our success. A number of our departments have grown to the point where they cannot easily accommodate further increases in enrollment and continue to give our students the individual attention they deserve. Will this impinge on our long and proud commitment to accessibility? Another problem stemming from our success is related to new faculty hiring. These faculty members are all active researchers who want to reach their full potential and train future researchers. Thus, the number of graduate students we have been accepting is increasing. Graduate students require more individual attention from professors and more financial support if we are to attract the best and the brightest. We face a real challenge in finding the means to support them in our increasingly underfunded university environment. Lastly, we face a gap between the reality of the revitalization that has so transformed the Faculty of Arts and Science, and Concordia in general, and public perceptions of the university, which have been slow to change. Not enough people understand what today's Faculty of Arts and Science is all about. We need to change that – it is in the long-term interests of our students, faculty, and alumni.

All of these challenges may appear daunting, but I take courage from the fact that they are challenges that stem from success. I have no doubt that the talented people that make up our Faculty are up to the task at hand, and I look forward to working with them closely over the coming months.

June Chaikelson

June Chaikelson, Dean
Faculty of Arts & Science

Cover photo by Christian Fleury: Bill Reimer in Ile Bigras, Québec (see story, page 3)



Ryan Blau

NRE Director and Sociology Professor Bill Reimer accompanied by student researchers

Cover story

Helping rural Canada

Sociology Professor Bill Reimer Heads Up Massive NRE Research Project

There has been much talk lately about the need to pump more federal and provincial tax dollars into big cities and craft an "urban agenda" but compared to the challenges facing rural Canadians, residents of Montreal, Vancouver, Toronto and other big cities have it easy.

"There's no doubt rural Canada has been facing a great deal of adversity in recent years," says Concordia Sociology Professor William Reimer. The fact that many of those challenges are interconnected and tend to reinforce each other's negative effects only exacerbates an already complex situation. For example out-migration and declining numbers of young people often make it difficult for rural communities to attract doctors or to keep local schools open; without such services, however, the number of young people who feel compelled to leave their communities only increases. It is the proverbial vicious circle.

Despite these challenges however, Reimer remains optimistic about the future of rural Canada and if any one has earned the right to optimism it's Reimer. Since 1997, Reimer has served as lead investigator and Project Director of the New Rural Economy (NRE) project. A massive, now nine-year project, NRE was designed specifically to examine the particular challenges facing rural Canada. Originally designed to end in 2002, the project was so successful that it was awarded an additional \$3 million in funding by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) to conduct another 3.5 years of study. This represents the largest amount SSHRC has ever funded for social science research. The project currently involves 15 Canadian researchers from all parts of the country, 25 institutional partners, and 32 rural sites. Two additional sites in Japan have also been integrated into the project in recent years to provide international comparisons to Canadian data. Reimer points out proudly that "our project is internationally recognized as an innovator in research focus, design, and collaboration. In our networks, which include scholars in Europe, Japan, the USA, and Australia, NRE is already known as the 'Concordia' project and is playing an important part in helping the university establish a strong international research profile," he added.

While the first five-year part of the project concentrated on better understanding the new realities and trends facing rural Canadians, the second component, known as NRE² is more about finding solutions. "The first NRE was focused on the changes in rural Canada, its increasing diversity and complexity. NRE² is about discovering what kinds of options rural people can choose, and are choosing, and the outcomes of these options" says Reimer. As part of this,

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"In our networks, which include scholars in Europe, Japan, the USA, and Australia, NRE is already known as the 'Concordia' project, and is playing an important part in helping the university establish a strong international research profile"



Christian Fleury

“Our towns and villages do not only provide us natural resources and food, they also play a crucial role in carbon sequestration, waste-processing, environmental protection, and heritage preservation”

Reimer’s team of researchers have been looking at “social capital” (as distinct from economic capital, human skills, and natural resources) which NRE² has classified into four distinct categories: market, bureaucratic, associative, and communal. Reimer and his team collect data on such things as involvement in voluntary associations, stress levels, and internet use to better understand what kind of social capital each of their 32 sites possess and how they are making use of that capital.

Crucially the project then goes a step further by sharing these findings with community partners in the 32 towns being studied so that they can adopt successful strategies employed by other communities. Reimer takes heart from examples such as how Cap-à-l’aigle, Québec, used a local interest in lilacs to create an annual festival drawing people from around the world or how Plum Coulee, Manitoba, is planning to transform a slated-to-be-abandoned grain elevator into a multipurpose facility that would house a restaurant, interpretive museum, offices and restaurants, a seniors’ centre, and a day care. “It provides a remarkable contrast to the ‘doom and gloom’ representation of the future for rural Canada that often appeared in the media” says Reimer. He added: “The diversity of responses that we’re seeing from the sites reflects considerable innovation and resilience.”

As for urban Canadians who may be quick to dismiss rural communities as lost causes, Reimer suggests thinking about all the ways that the two worlds, urban and rural, are interdependent. “Our towns and villages do not only provide us natural resources and food, they also play a crucial role in carbon sequestration, waste-processing, environmental protection, and heritage preservation” points out Reimer. “Their health and well-being is directly tied to that of urban Canadians, so it’s very much in all of our interests to make sure they adapt successfully to the new challenges of a globalized economy” he added in conclusion.

To learn more about NRE visit their web-site at: <http://nre.concordia.ca/> 



Ryan Blau



Ryan Blau

Unique opportunity

NRE is unique research opportunity for students

For sociology students Jessica Gallant (above left) and Tara Lyons (above right) the chance to work on the NRE² was just the kind of research project they were looking for. “It’s a great opportunity to see some of the research skills I read about in my text books applied in real life situations” says Gallant, a 28-year old working on her Masters in Sociology. Gallant’s role has largely been an administrative one so far, helping to coordinate the research activities of ten other students based in Montreal and liaising with a larger team of researchers and community contacts all across the country. “It’s helping me to develop leadership skills; for instance how to integrate a team,” says Gallant. In addition, she is developing other abilities including public-speaking, budgeting, and networking. Gallant says she was attracted to Concordia’s Sociology department because of its reputation for progressiveness and because the department’s professors emphasize the contemporary side of sociology. Longer-term she hopes to teach at the cégep level and work with community organizations. “NRE gives students an amazing opportunity to work with a diverse team,” stated Gallant. “In addition, many of the universities we work with in rural Canada do not have graduate programs. NRE affords students at these schools the chance to engage in high-level research, even to be published. In that regard, I think we’re playing an important social role,” she added.

For Tara Lyons, NRE² had a special personal appeal. The 28-year old is originally from the small town of Salmon Valley, outside Prince George, British Columbia, so she already had a keen interest in the challenges facing rural Canadians. Working with Bill Reimer was also a major incentive. “I had Professor Reimer as a teacher, and already had great respect for him” says Lyons. Working on NRE², Lyons has already acquired almost two years of research experience looking at how HIV and AIDS are dealt with in rural communities. She has authored two papers looking at aspects of the problem, namely HIV and aboriginal people, and HIV’s effect on social capital. “There’s an interesting debate about whether people with HIV are advantaged or disadvantaged by living in a rural community” says Lyons. “On the one hand there can be a strong sense of community that’s missing in large cities. On the other hand, privacy is often more elusive and people can have difficulty accessing health services.” Lyons credits NRE² with helping her connect with a national network of researchers, students, and colleagues. Like Gallant, she says it has allowed her to practice her classroom learning in a very real way. She plans to continue her studies at the Ph.D. level at Carleton and to focus her thesis project on drug use in rural Canada. “Obviously the things I’ve learned working on NRE² will be very relevant for my future studies” says Lyons. “I feel this project has created so many opportunities for me, that I’m probably not even aware of half of them” she added.



Ryan Blau

Attendees at the awarding of the bronze plaque.

Science Complex wins two prestigious awards

On October 21st Natural Resources Canada awarded a bronze plaque to Concordia in recognition that the science complex had fulfilled the requirements of the federal government's Commercial Building Incentive Program (CBIP). CBIP offers a financial incentive for the incorporation of energy efficiency features in new commercial and institutional building designs. Eligible building designs must demonstrate a reduction in energy use by at least 25% when compared to the requirements of the Model National Energy Code for Buildings (MNECB). Concordia is the first and presently sole university in Québec that has met the program requirements. Only seven other universities in Canada have received such an honor. By participating in the program, and in recognition for its efforts towards an energy-efficient design, Concordia received a subsidy of \$80,000 for the the science complex. For the first operating year, an actual energy saving of 48% has comfortably surpassed the minimum requirement of a 25% energy reduction above the MNECB standard efficiency.

In addition, the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers Inc (ASHRAE), awarded the science complex First Place - ASHRAE Technology Award in the Institutional Buildings Category This award recognizes successful applications of innovative design, which incorporate ASHRAE standards for effective energy management, indoor air quality and mechanical design management technology. Helped by an avant-garde design, the science complex's ventilation system provides occupants with more fresh air than is required by recognized industry standards.

Axworthy Inaugurates Habib Speaking Series



Former Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy

Former Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy delivered a fascinating and wide-ranging speech September 30 to inaugurate the Henry P. Habib Distinguished Speakers' Series on Peace, Conflict and Global Politics in the 21st Century. The new series is named after the long-time chair of the Political Science Department. Axworthy called on Canadians to take on the challenges of global citizenship, arguing that problems such as terrorism and climate change require an engaged and informed electorate. He warned against the dangers of complacency on the part of the public, who might understandably be cynical about the "war on terrorism" following unilateral U.S. military action and repeated false warnings about additional terrorist strikes since September 11, 2001.

Hingston Book Launch

An impressive guest list turned out October 20 at the Marché Bonsecours for the launch of Sir William Hingston (1829-1907), Montreal mayor, surgeon and banker by Montreal author Alan Hustak. The Chair of the Canadian Irish Studies Foundation, Brian O'Neill Gallery, a great-grandson of Sir Hingston, commissioned this biography with the understanding that net proceeds from the sales will fund the Sir William Hingston Scholarship in Canadian Irish Studies at Concordia. Among the attendees were Prime Minister Paul Martin, Mayor Gérard Tremblay, former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, and former Québec Premier Daniel Johnson.

William Hales Hingston enjoyed a remarkable career as both a doctor and a politician. He was the first surgeon to remove a kidney and the first to excise a tongue and lower jaw. He served two terms as Mayor of Montreal, during which time he established the city's first Board of Health; introduced compulsory vaccination during a Smallpox epidemic and was responsible for the construction of Mount Royal Park. His eldest son, also named William, was a Jesuit Priest who helped build Loyola College, now part of Concordia University, into a major institution.

The Centre for Canadian Irish Studies was created in 2000 through the joint financial support of Concordia University and the Canadian Irish Studies Foundation. Its mandate is to promote a fuller understanding of Ireland and the Irish experience in Canada. The Centre's Director, Michael Kenneally, remarked that: "the presence of the Prime Minister, former Prime Minister, former Premier of Quebec and Mayor of Montreal underlines the unique role that the Irish have played in Montreal and the special relationship between the Irish community and Concordia University." For more information on Irish Studies at Concordia see: <http://artsandscience.concordia.ca/irish/>

Rogers Sportsnet Workshop

On Saturday, October 23, at the DeSève Cinema, sports journalists from across the country gathered to share the insights from their careers and to interact with those interested in a life of sports reporting.

Among those attending were Stephen Brunt from the Globe and Mail, Scott Morrison and Deb Sanderson from Sportsnet, former Olympic athlete Laura Robinson, and Robin Brown, the host of CBC Radio's The Inside Track. The featured speaker was activist and historian Dr. Bruce Kidd, who has been called "the conscience of Canadian sport." He challenged students to resist the pressure to focus on "masculinist corporate sports productions" that tend to marginalize women and redefine both sport and excellence.

The event is sponsored by Rogers Sportsnet and was organized by the Departments of Journalism and Communication Studies.

Faculty Awards Evening

The Faculty of Arts and Science Awards Evening was held on September 28, 2004 at the Oscar Peterson Concert Hall. The ceremony honoured 150 students who earned the highest grade point average in the Faculty in 2003-04. The event was a great success and attracted faculty representatives for each Department and hundreds of students. The students achieved a remarkable feat, topping nearly the 15,000 program students enrolled in the faculty's various academic departments.



Luigi d'Astolfo

(From left to right) Marcel Danis; Paul Martin, Gérard Tremblay; Brian Mulroney; and Daniel Johnson



Harold Pearlman

Among the guests were Deb Sanderson; Stephen Brunt; Rob Faulds; Scott Morrison

(From left to right) Martine d'Amours; Perry Calce; Daniel Salée



Andrew Dobrowskyj

Silver anniversaries

Science College and the SCPA celebrate 25 years of innovative learning

Twenty-five years ago Concordia's Faculty of Arts and Science took the bold step of creating a new model, or more precisely five new models, for undergraduate education. The Faculty welcomed the arrival of several small units that would offer unique programs of study for a select group of students. Two of the colleges celebrated their silver anniversaries earlier this year. Now the School of Community Affairs and Science College take a moment to look back at what they have achieved and contemplate the bright future ahead.

School of Community and Public Affairs

Founded by Dr. Blair Williams with the assistance of Dr. Andrew Gollner, the School of Community and Public Affairs (SCPA) was originally aimed at training people who would eventually go on to work in government. The hope was that more anglophones and allophones would enter the Quebec public service, or other sectors focused on public policy and policy advocacy.

Prior to 2000, SCPA students could only be accredited as "members" of the School. Since 2000, they now have the opportunity to pursue a major in Community, Public Affairs and Policy Studies. The major is an undergraduate program designed to provide an interdisciplinary training and education in public policy analysis and policy advocacy by offering students a unique, bilingual university experience in a small, personalized learning environment. SCPA seeks to educate its students to be sensitive to the broad social, economic and political factors that are part of the public policy process.

The SCPA's current Principal, Dr. Daniel Salée, is especially proud of the school's outreach mission. Through numerous, free-access public lectures, symposia, and public debates organized by its members, the school brings in scholars, activists, and policy makers of national and international reputation. As such, the SCPA acts as an important forum in the Montreal area for the discussion and understanding of the key policy, public affairs and community issues of our times. One of the school's most ambitious current projects is spearheaded by the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) and involves collaboration with Simon Fraser University and two Ukrainian Universities: Uzhgorod National University and Cherkasy State Technological University. "We are working to train 10-12 professors from Ukraine in Community Economic Development," explains Dr. Salée. "This kind of project, which has a practical and positive impact on international governance is a perfect demonstration of how we see the mission of SCPA."



Andrew Dobrowskyj

(From left to right) Dania Adamusek; Louise Heneault-Ethier; Adrian Buensuceso; Dr. Michael Von Grünau; Sean Reed; and Diane Sliz

The school has also made an impact at home through a raft of impressive graduates who have left an important mark on Quebec and Canadian politics, notably Mario Dumont, Leader of the Action Démocratique party, Glen Murray, a former Mayor of Winnipeg. Other graduates typically go on to work in law, government, the social sector, and the media.

One graduate, Theodora Samiotis, explained how SCPA's program helped her to develop skills that would come in particularly useful when she eventually made it to Parliament Hill as an Assistant to MP Eleni Bakapanos: "It was working in Ottawa that I think my learning experience at SCPA served me most. My understanding of government and the policy process allowed me to hit the ground running," explained Samiotis. "I then spent two years at the Office of the Minister of National Defence as his special assistant for Quebec. Again, this was a memorable experience. My learnings from the SCPA were also useful as I was responsible for managing the various constituencies, MPs, policy makers, the military, etc. and providing political advice to the minister." Samiotis eventually left Ottawa to accept a position as Director of Communications and Public Affairs for one of Canada's largest and oldest pharmaceutical companies, Wyeth Canada. Again, her unique SCPA interdisciplinary training has come in useful as she was responsible for all communications activities and acted as spokesperson for the company.

In 1999, SCPA initiated a Graduate Diploma Program in Community Economic Development, the only program of its kind in Eastern Canada and the only one in the country to alternate languages. The school is now able to provide opportunities for continued studies beyond the undergraduate field for its students. "I'm proud of how we've grown," adds Dr. Salée. "I think we've created something truly unique, which fills a valuable niche in the Canadian university system."

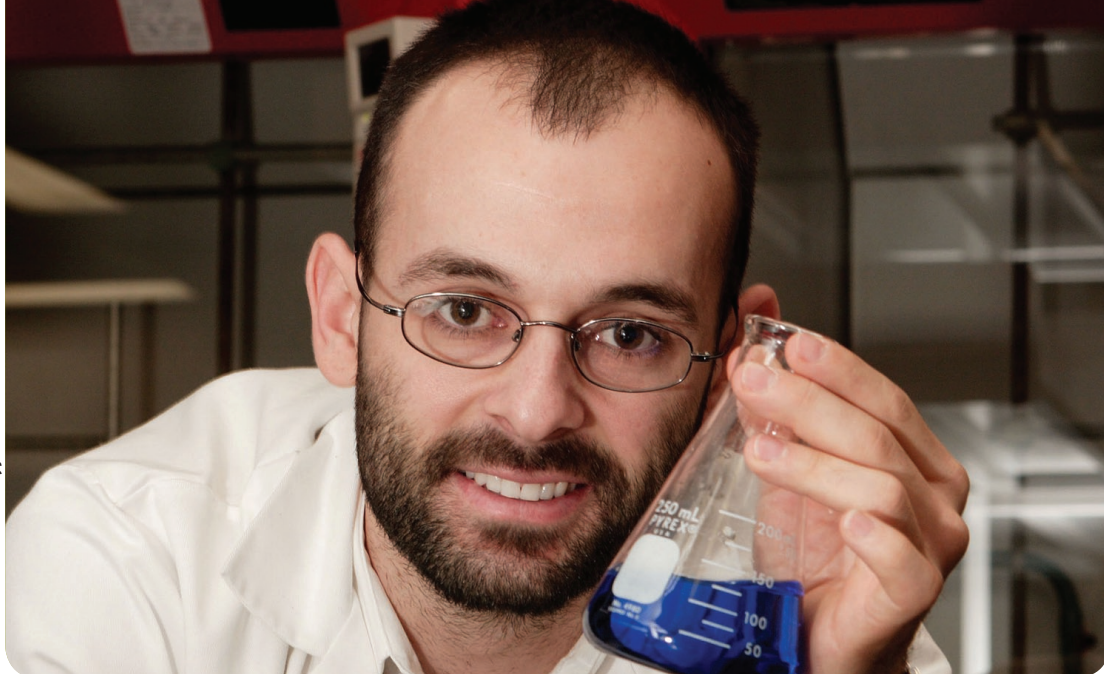
Science College

Science seems like an unlikely place to fruitfully adopt an interdisciplinary approach. The complexities of modern science usually requires extreme specialisation. For Science College Principal Dr. Michael von Grünau, however, it is precisely at the nexus of different disciplines that innovation is often found. Therefore at his college you'll find chemistry students learning about the physiology of vision of radiation or biology students learning about radiation in the solar system. Such courses are not part of the regular science curriculum and are not offered by traditional science departments. "We know, however, that the fast-changing nature of contemporary scientific research does not respect the traditional boundaries between disciplines" explains Dr. von Grünau.

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"...the fast-changing nature of contemporary scientific research does not respect the traditional boundaries between disciplines..."

Andrew Dobrowolskyj




Tapping potential

The Centre for Mature Students saw potential in star Biochemistry student

For Jean-Sébastien Scott, Concordia's reputation for accessibility is much more than a good marketing pitch, it's a reality that has enabled him to get back into the education system. The 25-year old biochemistry student has a story that's familiar to many who enter the university as mature students. He grew up on the West Island and attended a private high school before moving on to cégep. A year or so into cégep, Scott was offered a part-time position with a marketing company. Enjoying the challenge of a new job, Scott began taking on more and more responsibility. "The kind of independence I enjoyed as an 18-year old was a pretty heady experience" said Scott. With the business doing well, Scott began drifting more and more from his courses, eventually leaving cégep altogether. "The prospect of acquiring a degree began losing its appeal given the success I was enjoying in the private sector," said Scott.

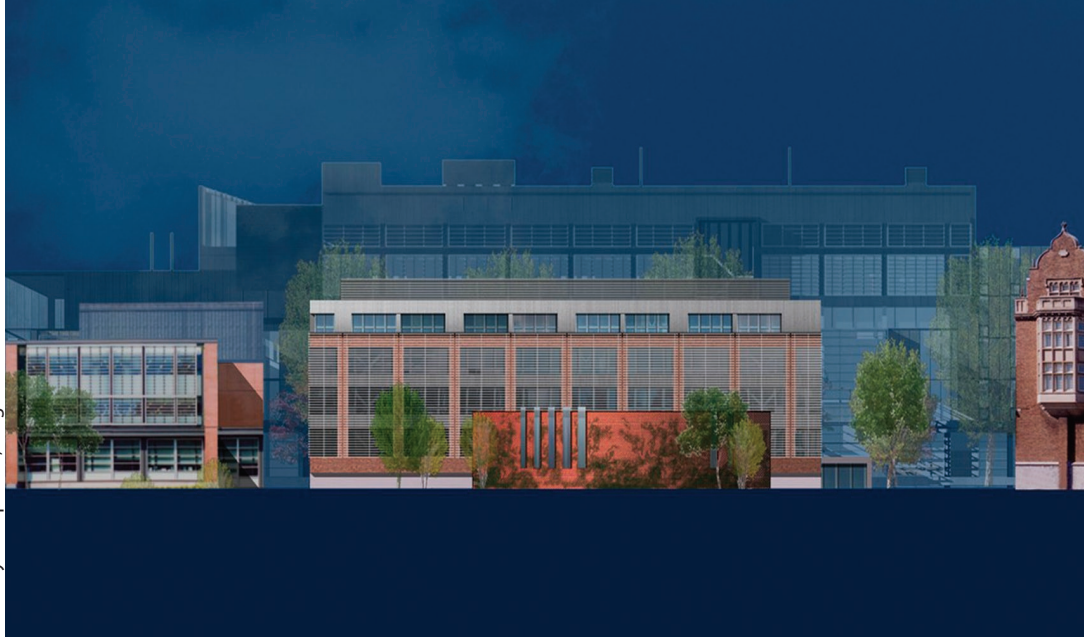
However, after several years out of the education system, Scott decided to return to studies. "I had never ruled out completing my studies" he says. "I just needed some time to find myself." Realizing that he would not fit in to the cégep environment, Scott began approaching local universities as a mature student. "Going from complete autonomy to depending on people for just about everything is a traumatic experience" said Scott. "Add to that the disappointment of having one school after the other tell you that you'd be better off going to night school given your particular academic background, and you've got yourself a genuine nightmare", he added

It was quite a different story, however, when Scott phoned Concordia's Centre for Mature Students. "Not once was my academic background an issue; in fact, it was only discussed to establish which courses I had received credits for. They even helped me develop an academic program that was suited to my specific needs," stated Scott.

After a year of completing pre-requisite courses, Scott enrolled in the Honours Biochemistry program. "The program has really grown on me" he said. "People here love what they're doing and it shows. Their doors are always open" he added. With respect to the program itself, Scott says "the amount of hands-on lab time you get far surpasses what I've seen offered in other schools." Concordia's faith in Scott has been more than compensated, as he has earned an outstanding 4.20 GPA, 78 credits into the program. "I have never doubted what I am capable of" asserts Scott. "I think that Concordia should be applauded for its capacity to recognize and encourage the potential in students and its continuous efforts to offer the very best in terms of staff and facilities for students" he added. Outside of school, Scott finds time to volunteer helping the intellectually handicapped and tutoring young students at his old high school. 

"People here love what they're doing and it shows. Their doors are always open"

Courtesy of Lapointe, Magne et associés




And we're off!

Construction of New Drummond Building Well Under Way

Concordia's Loyola campus is buzzing away once again this year with the sound of cement trucks, blow torches, and jackhammers. Hot on the heels of the award-winning Richard J. Renaud Science Complex, construction of an almost entirely new Drummond Building to house the Departments of Journalism and Communication Studies is well under way. Demolition work was completed early this fall, excavation for the new sub basements has wrapped up, work on the tunnel connecting Drummond to the Science Complex is underway, footing has been laid down, and the skeleton of the new building is gradually filling out. "So far, we're on budget and on schedule to officially open as planned in September 2005," says Robert Roy, Vice-Dean of Planning for the Faculty of Arts and Science. "Construction should largely be complete this spring, with the expectation that the two departments will move into the new space in August. Roy is clearly excited by how the new project is coming together, explaining that it will add more space to the old Drummond Building, and will feature better acoustics, better functionality, improved equipment and enhanced security features.

A common thread that runs through all of Concordia's new buildings is an emphasis on enhanced public spaces and the new Drummond will not be an exception. Although some Communication Studies alumnae might hold out a certain perverse nostalgia for conversation cliques that would form on the Bryan Buildings stairs, students in the improved Drummond Building will be able to stretch out in a student lounge, café and reception facilities, and an expanded book store. "The quality of life will definitely be enhanced" added Roy.

The addition of an extra television studio for Communication Studies, plus a separate studio exclusively for journalism students featuring anchor desks for news readers, in addition to a larger number of sound recording studios and video-editing suites will also mean fewer nights of students staying up all night to access precious studio time. 



Drawing of completed project (south elevation) (top of page) and frame of new building well on its way to completion (above)

25 years (continued from page 9)

This unusual rejection of specialization for interdisciplinarity is the hallmark trait of Science College. The college tries to resist the shift towards greater and greater specialization in favour of the idea that "science is a system of thought, not a collection of facts." The college has remained small since its inception, but what it lacks in size it makes up for in quality. Typically Science College students come into the program with the highest high school and cégep scores in the Faculty. "Having good grades is not enough, though" explains current Science College student Sean Reed. "You have to be extremely motivated since you take on a much heavier workload than your current student. Not only do you have to master your own discipline, how you to understand and even conduct research in at least one other," Reed adds. Fellow student Diana Sliz concurs arguing that "you have to desire to learn things for your own reasons, not just to complete a course or stake out a career." By way of example, Reed, a psychology major, points out that an experiment he conducted looking at how fish respond to scent cocktails. "What we learned was that fish's response to the scent of predators is a *learned* response, not a genetically hardwired one. So this experiment in biology may lead me to develop some pretty interesting hypotheses regarding human psychology."

Almost all Science College graduates go on to careers in academia, while others opt for medical school or the private sector. "An important improvement was the introduction a few years ago of a minor in Multidisciplinary Studies in Science," says Dr. von Grünau. Prior to that, like other Concordia Colleges in their early history, the only thing students had to show for their hard work on their transcripts was "Membership" in the Science College. As for the future, Dr. von Grünau sees a prosperous one for the Science College. "I think there's an increasing awareness of the importance of sharing knowledge across disciplines," says Dr. von Grünau "which obviously bodes well for the College." **P**

SCIENCE COLLEGE AND SCPA ALUMAE

Here's a great opportunity to see old friends and acquaintances and to mark a special moment in the history of SCPA and Science College. Both schools are planning special celebrations this spring to mark their 25th anniversaries. More details can be obtained by contacting the persons below:

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